

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G.# 72-9-24 Building Date: 1905

Building Name: James F. Armstrong House

Location: 908 59th Avenue, Fairmount Heights, Md.

Private/Residence/Occupied/Fair/Inaccessible

Description:

The James Armstrong House is a two-and-one-half-story frame crossgable house, Victorian vernacular in style. The principal east facade exhibits gable-front-and-wing plan, with the wing to the left and the gable front to the right. Entrance is in the second bay of the two-bay wing; the gable front is lighted by a two-story projecting semi-octagonal bay, with 2/2 windows in all faces. Both the wing and the gable front are sheltered by a one-story hip-roof wraparound porch with plain rail balustrade, turned posts, jigsawed openwork brackets, and rail frieze with alternating criss-cross detail. The original German wood siding is covered with gray asphalt shingle. The original siding is visible in the front gable; it is painted light beige. The crossgable roof is covered with red asphalt shingle. The hip roof which covers the two-story projecting bay forms the lower boundary of the east front gable at loft level, giving it the look of a pediment. The cornice of this hip roof is deeply molded with shallow medallions. The raking cornice of the gable is similarly molded. The east pediment itself is lighted by a four-pane round-arch window with board keystone molding.

Significance:

The James F. Armstrong House is a good representative of late Victorian vernacular dwellings with Queen Anne style decorative detail: it has fine detail in its wraparound porch, projecting bays and pediments. It was built circa 1904 for James F. Armstrong, who came to Fairmount Heights in that year and purchased three lots in the original subdivision. James F. Armstrong was a graduate of Tuskegee Institute; he subsequently attended Howard University Law School, graduating in 1904. In the following year he came to Fairmount Heights, purchased three lots in the original subdivision, and had the subject house built. In 1911 Armstrong was appointed as a member of the building committee for the proposed Fairmount Heights elementary school; he also served as the Superintendent of Colored Schools in Prince George's County. His tenure in this office was controversial, but he served until 1919. After his resignation in July of that year, he continued to be active in Fairmount Heights community affairs, and served as one of the first Council Members after the town was incorporated. His original dwelling is an important historical and architectural component in the community of Fairmount Heights.

Acreage: 10,800 square feet

Survey No. PG#72-9-24

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic James F. Armstrong House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 908 59th Avenue ☐ not for publication

city, town Fairmount Heights ☐ vicinity of congressional district 5

state MD county Prince George's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> In process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Don Garriss

street & number 908 59th Avenue telephone no.:

city, town Fairmount Heights state and zip code MD 20743

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 7347

street & number 14735 Main Street folio 128

city, town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. PG # 72-9-24

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The James F. Armstrong house stands at 908 59th (originally Fairmount) Avenue. It was built in 1905 on lots 33/34, Block B of the Fairmount Heights subdivision, which was platted in 1900.

The James Armstrong House is a two-and-one-half-story frame crossgable house, Victorian vernacular in style. The principal east facade exhibits gable-front-and-wing plan, with the wing to the left and the gable front to the right. Entrance is in the second bay of the two-bay wing; the gable front is lighted by a two-story projecting semi-octagonal bay, with 2/2 windows in all faces. Both the wing and the gable front are sheltered by a one-story hip-roof wraparound porch with plain rail balustrade, turned posts, jigsawn openwork brackets, and rail frieze with alternating criss-cross detail.

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8. Significance

Survey No. PG#72-8-24

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
			<input type="checkbox"/> science
			<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
			<input type="checkbox"/> social/
			<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
			<input type="checkbox"/> theater
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify

Specific dates 1905 Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The James F. Armstrong House is a good example of late Victorian Queen Anne domestic architecture. It was built in 1905 on one of the lots in the Fairmount Heights subdivision.

The Town of Fairmount Heights is located just outside the easternmost point of the District of Columbia in Prince George's County, Maryland; it is composed of a group of early twentieth-century subdivisions that form one of the earliest planned communities for blacks in the Washington, D. C., area. The community began with the Fairmount Heights subdivision in 1900, followed by five adjoining subdivisions, the last being Sylvan Vista platted in 1923. The Town was incorporated in 1935, and grew steadily through the years before World War II.

The land which was to become Fairmount Heights consisted, during the late nineteenth century, principally of parts of the small farms of John H. Wilson, John and Caroline Silence, Samuel Hoover, Mosby Brown and John Wiessner, all clustered around the east corner of the District of Columbia. In the early years of the twentieth century, these farms were bought up and subdivided by land speculators, who then began to sell individual lots to black families, most of whom worked in the District of Columbia.

The first section of Fairmount Heights was subdivided in 1900 by Robinson White and Allen Clark (both white men) out of parts of several small farms which they had purchased from the Wilson, Godfrey, Belt and Lee families. Robinson White was a lawyer and developer who resided in the District of Columbia; Allen C. Clark was a lawyer and manager of the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Washington, D. C. White and Clark had approximately fifty acres surveyed by County Surveyor Edward L. Latimer, and laid out in lots and streets radiating

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM
Statement of Significance (continued)

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from the northeast boundary of the District of Columbia. The deep, narrow lots were generally 25 by 125 feet; two of the streets were named for these first two developers. Sale of lots began almost immediately, and within a few years, dwellings were constructed and a community began to form.

From the beginning, blacks were encouraged to buy lots and settle in the new community. White and Clark sold the lots at relatively low prices, making home ownership finally attainable for black families. Most of the earliest purchasers of lots worked for government agencies; many built their own houses, or relied on friends and family to help with construction. Many families were quick to seize the opportunity to move out of the city, determined to progress, by hard work and amid healthful surroundings, toward a better life.

The earliest dwellings were of frame construction, modest in size and form, and many of these have not survived. Within a few years, however, several interesting and substantial houses were constructed for individuals who would make significant contributions to the development of Fairmount Heights.

The James F. Armstrong House is a good representative of late Victorian vernacular dwellings with Queen Anne style decorative detail: it has fine detail in its wraparound porch, projecting bays and pediments. It was built circa 1904 for James F. Armstrong, who came to Fairmount Heights in that year and purchased three lots in the original subdivision.

James F. Armstrong was a graduate of Tuskegee Institute; he subsequently attended Howard University Law School, graduating in 1904. In the following year he came to Fairmount Heights, purchased three lots in the original subdivision, and had the subject house built. It was a fine example of late Victorian Queen Anne style domestic architecture, a visual landmark and one of the handsomest dwellings in the early community. Its prominence is a reflection of the prominence of its earliest resident in the affairs of Fairmount Heights.

In 1911 Armstrong was appointed as a member of the building committee for the proposed Fairmount Heights elementary school, designed by W. Sidney Pittman. A few years later, Armstrong was named Director of Manual Training at that school; he also served as the Superintendent of Colored Schools in Prince George's County. His tenure in this office was controversial, but he served until 1919. After his resignation in July of that year, he continued to be active in Fairmount Heights community affairs, and served as one of the first Council Members after the town was incorporated. His original dwelling is an important historical and architectural component in the community of Fairmount Heights.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. PG#72-9-24

Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1900-1912
Federal Census, Prince George's County District #13, 1910
Floyd, Bianca P. , Records and Recollections, M-NCPPC 1989
Pearl, S.G. Fairmount Heights, Maryland, A History, M-NCPPC 1991

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 10,800 sq ft

Quadrangle name Washington East

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

TM 65, FH, Blk B, lots 32-34

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan G. Pearl, Research/Architectural Historian

organization Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission date June 1991

street & number c/o M-NCPPC, 4th floor CAB telephone 301-952-3521

city or town Upper Marlboro state MD 20772

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

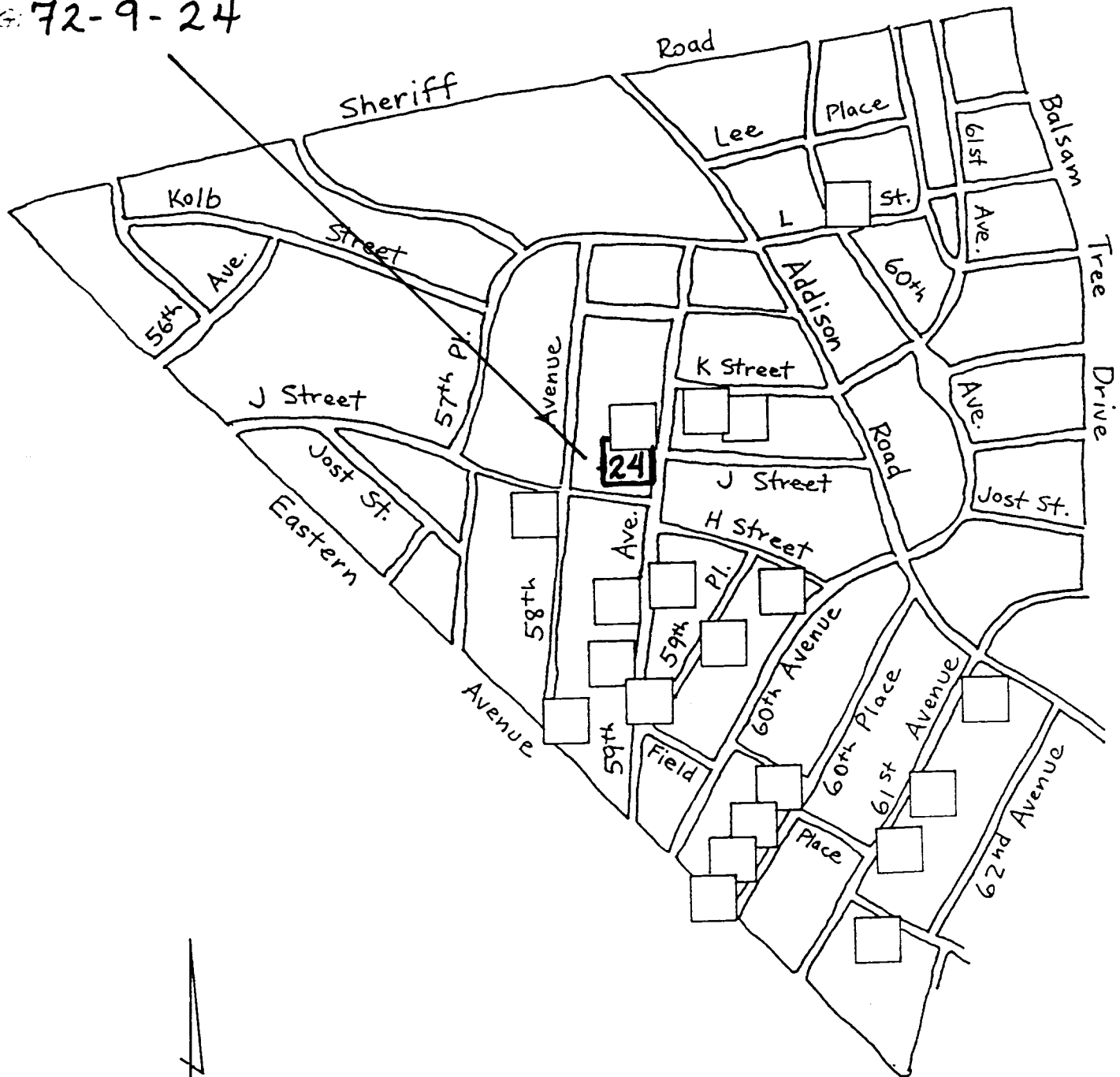
The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

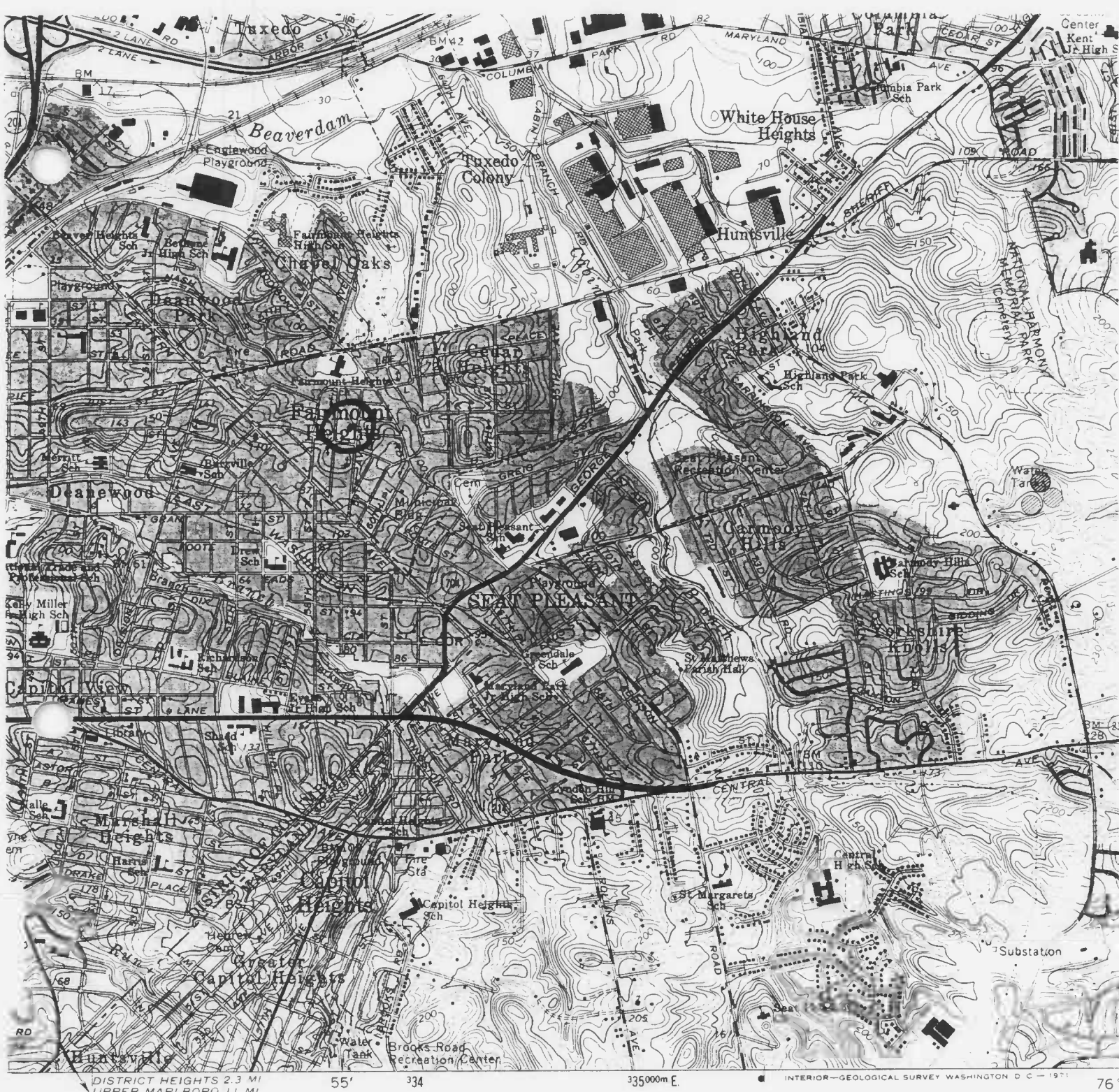
return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

Town of Fairmount Heights

JAMES F. ARMSTRONG HOUSE

PG: 72-9-24

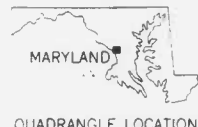




DISTRICT HEIGHTS 2.3 MI
 UPPER MARLBORO 11 MI
 55' 334 335000m E
 1 MILE
 100 5000 6000 7000 FEET
 1 KILOMETER
) FEET
 EVEL
 ATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
 LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
 ATEL FEET
 ACCURACY STANDARDS
 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
 MBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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ROAD CLASSIFICATION
 Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
 Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt =====
 () Interstate Route () U. S. Route () State Ro



WASHINGTON EAST, MD.—D. C.
 N3852.5—W7652.5/7.5
 1965
 PHOTOREVISED 1971
 AMS 5661 IV NW—SERIES V833



Pb # 72-9-24

James J. Armstrong House

908 59th Ave, Lacrimant
Hpts.

(FH B. 33/34) P.G.Cc.

Laura H. Paul

September 1990

Ref: MH/T

East facade